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ABSTRACT

This presentation discusses the factors that an intramural director considers in providing officials for intramural contests. The discussion centers around what attracts students to officiating, training methods, the importance of close game supervision, how the quality of officiating can be improved by modifying the rules of play and the program format, and the effects of having no officials at all. (JD)

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USING STUDENTS SUCCESSFULLY AS OFFICIALS IN A COLLEGIATE INTRAMURAL PROGRAM

by

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SINCE YOU'RE GOING TO HEAR ABOUT SPECIFIC METHODS OF TRAINING OFFICIALS IN A CLASSROOM SITUATION FROM KATHY, AND THEY WOULD BE QUITE SIMILAR TO WHAT COULD BE DONE IN INTRAMURALS, I'D LIKE TO CONCENTRATE ON THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE QUALITY OF OFFICIATING IN INTRAMURALS.

IN LOOKING AT THE TITLE OF MY TALK -- USING STUDENTS SUCCESSFULLY AS OFFICIALS IN A COLLEGIATE INTRAMURAL PROGRAM -- I FOCUSED ON THE WORD "SUCCESSFULLY" WITH SOME AMUSEMENT AS I BEGAN TO PREPARE MY COMMENTS. THE PERCEPTION OF SUCCESS OR FAILURE IS HEAVILY INFLUENCED BY PEOPLE'S DIFFERENT POINTS-OF-VIEW, EXPECTATIONS AND THE CIRCUMSTANCES INVOLVED. EVEN IF A CREW OF OFFICIALS WERE TO WORK A NEAR-PERFECT GAME, WE ALL KNOW THERE COULD STILL BE A RATHER VIOLENT NEGATIVE REACTION TO THE JOB DONE. WHEN BO SCHEMBECHLER RETIRED AFTER THIS YEAR'S ROSE BOWL, ONE OF HIS COMMENTS WAS THAT HE WOULDN'T MISS THE INCOMPETENT OFFICIATING. COACHES DON'T WANT THE OUTCOME OF A GAME TO BE DECIDED BY WHAT IS PERCEIVED TO BE A BAD OFFICIAL'S CALL, AND RIGHTLY SO. BUT IF SOMEONE MAKES ONE BAD CALL AT THE WRONG TIME, THEN COACHES TEND TO LAMBAST THE OFFICIATING AS THOUGH IT WERE ALL BAD. I REMEMBER OFFICIATING A BASKETBALL GAME WITH A GUY WHO USED TO BE A BASKETBALL COACH, HIMSELF, AND HE TOLD ME THAT HE IS OFTEN TEMPTED TO GO UP TO A COACH WHO WAS COMPLAINING AND POINT OUT ALL THE COACHING MISTAKES HE MADE DURING THE GAME.

ON THE OTHER HAND, WE COULD OBSERVE A PARTICULAR GAME AND PICK OUT ALL SORTS OF MISTAKES THE OFFICIALS MADE, YET NOTHING MUCH "HAPPENS" IN TERMS OF PLAYER-COACH-FAN REACTION. SO WHEN WE SPEAK OF SUCCESS IN OFFICIATING, WE REALLY HAVE TO SPEAK IN TERMS OF RELATIVE SUCCESS. IT JUST DEPENDS. INTRAMURAL DIRECTORS, IN PARTICULAR, HAVE TO THINK IN TERMS OF RELATIVE SUCCESS (ACTUALLY IT'S MORE LIKE CUTTING YOUR LOSSES) BECAUSE A NUMBER OF FACTORS WORKS AGAINST TRULY SATISFACTORY OFFICIATING PERFORMANCES.

FIRST OF ALL, THERE'S THE PROBLEM OF GETTING THE "HORSES" TO BEGIN WITH. I THINK OFFICIATING IS VERY SIMILAR TO ATHLETICS IN THIS REGARD. NO MATTER HOW GOOD A COACH YOU ARE, OR INSTRUCTOR OF OFFICIALS, YOU CAN'T DO MUCH WITH PEOPLE WHO DON'T HAVE THE INHERENT TALENT TO DO THE JOB. THE LONGER I STAY IN THIS RACKET, THE MORE I'M CONVINCED THAT GOOD OFFICIALS JUST COME TO YOU WITH THE RIGHT PERSONALITIES AND RIGHT SENSES OF JUDGMENT THAT MAKE THEM GOOD OFFICIALS. OF COURSE THEY HAVE TO LEARN THE RULES AND MECHANICS, BUT THE RAW TALENT IS ALREADY THERE --THEY HAVE A CERTAIN PRESENCE THAT IS ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO TEACH. ONE OF THE BEST OFFICIALS I EVER HAD ACTUALLY DIDN'T KNOW THE RULES OR MECHANICS AS WELL AS SOME OTHER GUYS, BUT HE COULD CONTROL A GAME. HE DID IT WITH SOME SORT OF INNATE ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE WITH PEOPLE UNDER STRESSFUL CIRCUMSTANCES. I CERTAINLY DIDN'T TEACH HIM THAT. ON THE OTHER HAND, I'VE HAD PEOPLE WHO COULD GIVE YO THE RIGHT ANSWER TO EVERY RULES OR MECHANICS QUESTION YOU COULD THINK OF, BUT THEY DIDN'T HAVE GOOD JUDGMENT. I CAN REMEMBER A TOUCH FOOTBALL OFFICIAL IN PARTICULAR WHERE IT WAS ALMOST INEVITABLE THAT SOME SORT OF CRUCIAL PLAY AT THE END OF A GAME THAT HE WAS INVOLVED IN WOULD RESULT IN A BIG ARGUMENT. THIS GUY JUST SEEMED TO ATTRACT TROUBLE, BUT HE DIDN'T KNOW HOW TO GET OUT OF IT. OFTEN ENOUGH, I WAS THE ONE WHO HAD TO SETTLE DISPUTES DURING HIS GAMES

OFFICIALS FOR INTRAMURALS MUST COME FROM THE STUDENT BODY, AND IN ALMOST EVERY CASE, WHEN THEY COME TO THE INTRAMURAL DEPARTMENT FOR THEIR FIRST YEAR OF OFFICIATING THEY COME AS COMPLETE ROOKIES, NEVER HAVING OFFICIATED BEFORE. THEY DON'T KNOW HOW TO BLOW A WHISTLE AUTHORITATIVELY, THEY DON'T KNOW ABOUT POSITIONING ON THE COURT OR FIELD, AND THEY ONLY THINK THEY KNOW THE RULES. AS A MATTER OF FACT, THERE IS A VERY NATURAL STATE OF CONFUSION AMONGST OFFICIALS AND PLAYERS ALIKE ABOUT

THE RULES, ESPECIALLY IN BASKETBALL AND FOOTBALL. PEOPLE WATCH HIGH SCHOOL, AND PRO GAMES, AND THE RULES GET INTERMIXED IN THEIR HEADS.

WHY PEOPLE WANT TO GET INVOLVED IN OFFICIATING I DON'T KNOW -- THE REASONS PROBABLY VARY FROM ONE INDIVIDUAL TO ANOTHER -- BUT IT CAN'T BE MONEY, AT LEAST NOT AS THE PRIMARY REASON. THE GRIEF ONE TAKES ISN'T WORTH THE SMALL AMOUNT OF MONEY THAT INTRAMURAL DEPARTMENTS CAN PAY -- USUALLY LITTLE MORE THAN MINIMUM WAGE. AS A MATTER OF FACT, I CAN RECALL THAT WHEN I GOT INVOLVED IN OFFICIATING AS AN UNDERGRADUATE, I WAS ACTUALLY SURPRISED TO FIND OUT THAT I WAS GOING TO GET PAID AT ALL. I WAS REALLY THERE FOR THE "FUN" OF IT. OR MAYBE IT WAS THE SENSE OF ADVENTURE, THE CHANCE TO CONTROL A POTENTIALLY VOLATILE SITUATION.

WICHITA STATE IS A COMMUTER CAMPUS WHERE A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WORK THEIR WAY THROUGH SCHOOL. SO, THERE'S A RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBER OF STUDENTS ON CAMPUS WHO CAN AFFORD THE LUXURY OF "AMUSING" THEMSELVES BY OFFICIATING INTRAMURALS AT MINIMUM WAGE. WE HAVE TO OFFER STUDENTS A PER GAME WAGE AND NUMBER OF HOURS THAT CAN COMPETE WITH WHAT THEY CAN MAKE AT A PLACE LIKE MCDONALD'S. ONE THING I'VE DISCOVERED OVER THE YEARS IS THAT HIGHER AND HIGHER WAGES DON'T ATTRACT A HIGHER AND HIGHER PERCENTAGE OF QUALITY OFFICIALS. THEY JUST ATTRACT MORE PEOPLE, WHICH IS STILL A GOOD THING BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO MAN THE FIELDS OR COURTS WITH "X" NUMBER OF BODIES PER DAY. AS AN INTRAMURAL DIRECTOR, YOU CAN'T GET TOO PICKY.

ONE INTERESTING SITUATION WITH REGARD TO RECRUITING AND RETAINING OFFICIALS OCCURRED IN THE EARLY 1970'S WHILE I WAS AN ASSISTANT AT PENN STATE. THERE WERE A LOT OF BLACK-WHITE PROBLEMS BACK THEN ON ALL CAMPUSES, BUT THEY WERE PARTICULARLY ACUTE AT PENN STATE BECAUSE THERE TRADITIONALLY WERE FEW BLACKS ON CAMPUS. IN THE EARLY 1970'S, THE STATE

LEGISLATURE PASSED A BILL THAT MADE MONEY AVAILABLE FOR INNER CITY YOUTHS TO ATTEND COLLEGE, AND WE SAW A NOTICEABLE INFLUX OF BLACK STUDENTS ONTO THE CAMPUS AND INTO THE INTRAMURAL PROGRAM. AND WE BEGAN TO HAVE MANY MORE BLACK-WHITE CONFLICTS THAN IN THE PAST. IN ORDER TO TONE THINGS DOWN, THE INTRAMURAL STAFF MADE AN EFFORT TO RECRUIT BLACK STUDENTS AS OFFICIALS, PARTICULARLY IN BASKETBALL. BUT ONCE WE GOT A FEW KIDS, WE FUND DIFFICULTY IN KEEPING THEM BECAUSE OF PEER PRESSURE. BLACK PLAYERS GOT VERY UPSET WITH BLACK OFFICIALS WHEN PREDOMINANTLY BLACK TEAMS PLAYED PREDOMINANTLY WHITE TEAMS. BLACK PLAYERS EXPECTED BLACK OFFICIALS TO SHOW FAVORITISM TOWARD THE BLACK TEAM OUT OF RACIAL LOYALTY. WHEN A BLACK OFFICIAL MADE A CALL THAT A BLACK TEAM DIDN'T LIKE, THE OFFICIAL TENDED TO BE THREATENED AND CALLED AN "UNCLE TOM." WE LOST SOME GOOD BLACK OFFICIALS BECAUSE OF THAT, OR AT LEAST THEY REFUSED TO OFFICIATE ANY BLACK-WHITE GAMES. THEN THE BLACK TEAMS WOULD ACCUSE THE INTRAMURAL STAFF OF RACISM BECAUSE WE DIDN'T HAVE BLACK OFFICIALS OFFICIATING THEIR GAMES. WE WENT AROUND AND AROUND IN CIRCLES ON THAT ONE.

ONE WOULD THINK THAT EXTENSIVE TRAINING PROCEDURES WOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARD SUCCESSFUL OFFICIATING IN INTRAMURALS. BUT IN WORKING WITH INTRAMURALS AT THREE DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES, WE NEVER GOT INVOLVED IN EXTENSIVE TRAINING PROGRAMS. KIDS DON'T WANT TO GO THROUGH THE DRUDGERY OF A DETAILED, COMPETENCY-BASED TRAINING PROGRAM THAT REQUIRES THEM TO PASS WRITTEN AND PRACTICAL EXAMS. INTRAMURAL DIRECTORS ARE INVOLVED IN A BALANCING ACT ON THIS ISSUE BECAUSE THE LAW OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND IS ON THE STUDENTS' SIDE. AS I MENTIONED BEFORE, THE INTRAMURAL PROGRAM NEEDS "X" NUMBER OF OFFICIALS FOR A PARTICULAR SPORT, AND THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS INTERESTED IN OFFICIATING IS USUALLY SO LOW THAT YOU CAN'T GET TOO CHOOSY OR PUT TOO MUCH OF A BURDEN ON THEM BECAUSE THEY'LL JUST QUIT.

AS A COMPROMISE MEASURE, WHAT SEEMS TO WORK BEST, AND WE DID THIS AT ALL THREE SCHOOLS THAT I'VE WORKED, IS A ONE-NIGHT CLINIC WHERE WE GO OVER RULES, POSITIONING, ADMINISTRATIVE DUTIES AND PROCEDURES FOR HANDLING DEVIANT BEHAVIOR. NOW, WE ALL KNEW THAT THAT WASN'T REALLY SUFFICIENT TRAINING, BUT IT WAS MORE OF AN ORIENTATION TO GET THINGS STARTED. MOST IMPORTANTLY, AND THIS IS WHERE INTRAMURALS HAS AN ADVANTAGE OVER VARSITY SCHOLASTIC ATHLETICS, THE INTRAMURAL SUPERVISORS WOULD WATCH THE OFFICIALS PERFORM DURING THEIR GAMES AND MAKE SUGGESTIONS TO THEM DURING BREAKS IN THE GAMES OR AFTER THE GAMES. I HAVE FOUND THIS PROCESS TO BE VERY HELPFUL, BECAUSE ON-THE-SPOT ADVICE HAS MUCH MORE IMPACT ON LEARNING THAN PRE-SEASON TRAINING. IT SINKS IN BETTER BECAUSE YOU HAVE AN ACTUAL SITUATION TO RELATE TO.

HAVING A COMPETENT SUPERVISOR WATCHING GAMES IS A MAJOR ADVANTAGE, AND A NECESSARY ADVANTAGE, OVER THE VARSITY ATHLETICS SITUATION WHERE OFFICIALS ARE SOLELY IN CONTROL OF GAMES. WHEN STUDENTS OFFICIATE OTHER STUDENTS, THERE IS A LESSENED SENSE OF CONTROL THAN IF OLDER PEOPLE WERE OFFICIATING, EVERYTHING ELSE BEING EQUAL. HAVING AN AUTHORITY FIGURE ON THE SIDELINE AVAILABLE TO STEP IN IMMEDIATELY WHEN THERE'S TROUBLE OR A RULES DISPUTE IS REALLY HELPFUL, ESPECIALLY IF EVERYONE KNOWS THAT THE SUPERVISOR CAN MAKE FINAL JUDGMENTS. IN MY OPINION THAT'S THE BEST WAY TO RUN AN INTRAMURAL PROGRAM. THERE ARE NO PROTESTS OVER OFFICIATING MISTAKES AFTER THE GAME IS OVER. WHEN A DISPUTE ARISES BETWEEN PLAYERS AND OFFICIALS, THE SUPERVISOR SETTLES IT RIGHT THEN AND THERE. IT DOESN'T CARRY OVER INTO THE NEXT DAY. SUPERVISORS CAN PROVIDE OFFICIALS WITH IMMEDIATE SUPPORT, AND ABSORB SOME OF THE PLAYER ABUSE, AND THAT SHOULD ALLOW STUDENT OFFICIALS TO FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE DOING THEIR JOBS.

ONE OF THE REAL NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF INTRAMURALS IS THAT PARTICIPANTS

OFTEN HAVE THE SAME INTENSE ATTITUDES TOWARD A GAME AS DO VARSITY ATHLETES, BUT THE CONTROL AND CONSTRAINT MECHANISMS ARE NOT AS STRONG IN INTRAMURALS. THE OFFICIATING ISN'T AS COMPETENT(USUALLY) AND THERE ARE NO ADULT AUTHORITY FIGURES ACTING AS COACHES, SO INTRAMURAL PARTICIPANTS OFTEN GET OUT OF CONTROL, AND IT IS FREQUENTLY LEFT TO THE INTRAMURAL SUPERVISOR TO LAY DOWN THE LAW. SO, DILIGENT SUPERVISION CAN HELP OFFICIALS BECOME BETTER OFFICIALS THROUGH PERIODIC INSTRUCTION, AD THEY ACT AS A SAFETY NET FOR ULTIMATE GAME CONTROL.

ANOTHER ADVANTAGE THAT THE INTRAMURAL DIRECTOR HAS OVER VARSITY ATHLETICS IS THAT HE OR SHE CAN AFFECT THE QUALITY OF OFFICIATING IN AN INDIRECT BUT VERY EFFECTIVE WAY -- BY MANIPULATING THE RULES OF PLAY AND, TO SOME DEGREE, THE OVERALL PROGRAM FORMAT. LET ME GIVE SOME EXAMPLES. AS I MENTIONED BEFORE, THE ATTITUDES OF MANY INTRAMURAL PARTICIPANTS IS AS INTENSE AS THOSE OF VARSITY ATHLETES. THEY WANT TO WIN, AND THEY WANT TO LOOK GOOD IN FRONT OF THEIR PEERS. IN MY OPINION, TYPICAL INTRAMURAL PROGRAMS FUEL THOSE ATTITUDES AND MAKE THEM WORSE. THERE ARE, OF COURSE, CHAMPIONSHIPS TO BE WON, ALONG WITH TROPHIES AND MEDALS; THERE ARE POINTS TO BE EARNED TOWARD AN ALL-SPORTS TROPHY TO BE AWARDED AT THE END OF THE YEAR; AND THERE IS THE PUBLICITY THAT WINNERS GET IN THE STUDENT NEWSPAPER. ALL THOSE THINGS ARE ACTUALLY EXTERNAL TO THE CONTEST ITSELF. THEY ACT AS <u>EXTRA</u> INCENTIVE TO WIN, BEYOND THE NORMAL HUMAN COMPETITIVE URGE. AND THAT MAKES OFFICIATING MORE DIFFICULT BECAUSE PLAYERS BECOME LESS TOLERANT OF OFFICIALS' MISTAKES, AND IT BECOMES EASIER TO ARRIVE AT THE CONCLUSION THAT THE OFFICIALS ARE DOING A BAD JOB.

DURING MY TENURE AT WICHITA STATE I TOOK SOME ACTION ON THIS POINT. I FIGURED THAT, IF I COULD LITTLE BY LITTLE GET RID OF THESE INCENDIARY ELEMENTS OF THE PROGRAM, MAYBE THE ATMOSPHERE OF PLAY WOULD IMPROVE, AND

AT LEAST THE PERCEPTION THAT THE OFFICIATING IMPROVED WOULD BE BETTER. SO, THAT'S WHAT I DID. AFTER SOME CAJOLING AND POLITICAL MANEUVERING, I CONVINCED ENOUGH STUDENTS ONE YEAR THAT WE SHOULD GET RID OF AWARDS. THE NEXT YEAR WE GOT RID OF THE POINT SYSTEM. A COUPLE OF YEARS LATER WE GOT RID OF CHAMPIONSHIPS IN TEAM SPORTS. TEAMS PLAYED A SCHEDULE OF "X" NUMBER OF GAMES, AND THE SEASON WAS OVER. ALL THE WHILE I WAS DOING MY BEST TO DISCOURAGE NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF INTRAMURALS. ALL OF THIS WAS DESIGNED TO REDUCE PLAYERS' PERCEPTION THAT WINNING IN INTRAMURALS WAS OF THE UTMOST IMPORTANCE. WHAT I WANTED THEM TO ADOPT WAS THE ATTITUDE THAT JUST PLAYING AND HAVING A GOOD EXPERIENCE IS WHAT IS IMPORTANT.

AS A RESULT OF ALL THIS, THE BEHAVIOR OF THE PARTICIPANTS IMPROVED ENOUGH TO BE NOTICEABLE. WE STILL HAD SOME PROBLEMS, BUT NOT AS MANY AS BEFORE. AN INTERESTING SIDE BENEFIT TO THE NO CHAMPIONSHIPS POLICY WAS THAT THE NUMBER OF SPECTATORS AT THE GAMES WENT DOWN DRAMATICALLY. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE GAMES WENT DOWN, SO IT WASN'T AS MUCH FUN TO WATCH OTHER PEOPLE PLAY. I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT SPECTATORS CAUSED TROUBLE DURING INTRAMURALS, NOT ONLY BY DIRECTLY HARASSING THE OFFICIALS, BUT BY INFLUENCING THE PLAYERS TO ACT AS THOUGH THIS WAS THE "BIG TIME." IT INFLUENCED THEM TO BE MORE AGGRESSIVE. SO, THE TOTAL PACKAGE IMPROVED THE OFFICIATING SITUATION.

THEN I GOT A LITTLE GREEDY. THE MODERATE SUCCESS OF WHAT I'D ALREADY DONE LED ME TO WANT MORE. FOR YEARS, I HAD WONDERED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE GOT RID OF OFFICIALS ALTOGETHER. I HAD COME TO SUSPECT THAT THE VERY PRESENCE OF OFFICIALS (ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO MAKE A LOT OF BAD CALLS) ACTUALLY FRUSTRATED PLAYERS MORE THAN IF THE PLAYERS CONTROLLED THEIR OWN GAMES. I WANTED TO TRY IT. THE CIRCUMSTANCES WERE RIGHT IN THE SENSE THAT THERE WAS NOTHING "AT STAKE" FOR WINNING, EXCEPT PERSONAL

PRIDE (NO AWARDS, NO CHAMPIONSHIPS). SO, I DID SOME MORE ARM TWISTING, AND AGAIN CONVINCED ENOUGH PEOPLE TO GO WITH IT. THE BASIC IDEA WAS TO TAKE ENTRIES, SCHEDULE THE GAMES, PROVIDE THE FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT, HAVE ONE SUPERVISOR PER FIELD OR COURT, AND LET THE PLAYERS RUN THEIR OWN GAMES WITHIN A CERTAIN TIME LIMIT.

TWO MAJOR THINGS HAPPENED. ONE, PARTICIPANT BEHAVIOR IMPROVED EVEN FURTHER, TO A LEVEL THAT WAS ACCEPTABLE TO ME; AND, TWO, AND THIS WAS THE DOWN SIDE OF IT, PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM DROPPED OFF BY ABUT 50%. IT COULD BE THAT THE BEHAVIOR IMPROVED BECAUSE THOSE PEOPLE WHO WERE MOST LIKELY TO CAUSE PROBLEMS NO LONGER WERE INVOLVED IN THE PROGRAM. TO A LOT OF PEOPLE, PLAYING WITHOUT OFFICIALS JUST WASN'T SPECIAL ENOUGH TO COMMIT TO A SPECIFIC SCHEDULE. AFTER A COUPLE OF YEARS, WE WENT BACK TO OFFICIATED GAMES TO GET THE PARTICIPATION BACK UP. BUT THE IDEA DID WORK UNDER THE LIMITED CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WE HAD GOING.

I MENTIONED THAT THE RULES CAN BE MANIPULATED TO IMPROVE THE OFFICIATING. MODIFYING SPORTS RULES FOR INTRAMURALS IS STANDARD PRACTICE, AND IT'S DONE FOR SEVERAL REASONS -- TO IMPROVE ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY (THAT WOULD INCLUDE OFFICIATING, REDUCTION IN THE AMOUNT OF EQUIPMENT NECESSARY, STANDARDIZING THE TIME LENGTH OF A CONTEST, ETC.), INJURY REDUCTION, IMPROVING THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLAYERS IN THE GAME, AND SO FORTH. PROBABLY THE MOST MODIFIED GAME FOR INTRAMURALS IS FOOTBALL, AND THERE ARE SEVERAL RULES THAT HAVE BEEN CHANGED TO MAKE THE GAME SAFER AND MORE MANAGEABLE. OF COURSE, TACKLE FOOTBALL ISN'T PLAYED -- IT'S EITHER ONE-HAND TOUCH, TWO-HAND TOUCH, OR FLAG. TWO-HAND TOUCH WAS THE ORIGINAL IDEA, I THINK, BUT LOTS OF SCHOOLS WENT TO ONE-HAND TOUCH BECAUSE IT MADE FOR AN EASIER OFFICIAL'S CALL, AND IT REDUCED THE NUMBER OF COLLISIONS ON THE FIELD BECAUSE A DEFENDER

DIDN'T HAVE TO GET AS CLOSE TO THE BALL CARRIER TO MAKE THE TOUCH. I SUPPOSE SO MANY DISPUTES AROSE OVER WHETHER A TAG WAS REALLY MADE OR NOT THAT SOMEONE CAME UP WITH THE FLAG IDEA, SUCH THAT A PLAYER WASN'T CONSIDERED DOWN UNLESS A DEFENDER HAD THE BALL CARRIER'S FLAG IN HAND. THAT WAS A GREAT IDEA FOR IMPROVING THE OFFICIATING, BUT IT ALSO INCREASED THE ROUGHNESS OF THE GAME, BECAUSE DEFENDERS FEEL MORE OBLIGED TO GET IN CLOSER TO A BALL CARRIER TO IMPROVE THE CHANCES OF ACTUALLY GRABBING THE FLAG. MY PERSONAL PREFERENCE IS ONE-HAND TOUCH, FOR SAFETY PURPOSES.

JUST AS TACKLING MUST BE MODIFIED, SO MUST BLOCKING. THIS IS THE TOUGHEST CALL AN INTRAMURAL OFFICIAL MUST MAKE, AND IT'S THE AREA OF THE GAME THAT LEADS TO THE MOST TROUBLE. SINCE MODIFICATIONS MUST BE MADE AS TO THE <u>INTENSITY</u> OF A BLOCK, THAT MAKES FOR AN EXTREMELY DIFFICULT JUDGMENT FOR THE OFFICIALS. ROUGH PLAY QUICKLY ESCALATES IN THE FACE OF INCONSISTENCY ON THAT PARTICULAR CALL. SOME INTRAMURAL PROGRAMS HAVE TRIED TO ELIMINATE THAT JUDGMENT BY NOT ALLOWING BLOCKING AT ALL. BUT SOME SORT OF RULE MUST BE SET TO ALLOW THE QUARTERBACK TIME TO THROW THE BALL, SUCH AS MOVING THE DEFENSIVE LINE OF SCRIMMAGE FIVE YARDS AWAY FROM THE BALL.

THE ABSOLUTE MOST IMPORTANT THING AN INTRAMURAL PROGRAM CAN DO TO HELP THE OFFICIALS IS TO ELIMINATE THE KICKING ASPECT OF FOOTBALL -- NO PUNTS, KICKOFFS, FIELD GOALS OR EXTRA POINTS. I SWEAR ABOUT HALF THE OFFICIAL RULE BOOK DEALS WITH STUFF THAT CAN HAPPEN DURING A KICK. ALL THAT RULES STUDY AND POTENTIAL TROUBLE CAN BE ELIMINATED. ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT FACTOR DETERMINING HOW WELL A GAME IS OFFICIATED HAS TO DO WITH THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS ON A TEAM. THE USUAL NUMBER IS ELEVEN, OF COURSE, BUT TOUCH FOOTBALL CAN BE PLAYED WITH SIX, SEVEN, OR EIGHT

PLAYERS. FEWER PLAYERS ON THE FIELD REDUCES THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS HITTING EACH OTHER AND THE NUMBER OF PLAYERS THE OFFICIALS HAVE TO WATCH HITTING EACH OTHER. IT MAKES FOR A POTENTIALLY BETTER CONTROLLED GAME.

I'D LIKE TO MENTION ONE OTHER SPORT, AND THAT'S VOLLEYBALL. NEXT TO FOOTBALL AND BASKETBALL, ONE WOULD THINK THAT OFFICIATING VOLLEYBALL WOULD B A VACATION. IT'S NOT. EVERY TIME A PLAYER TOUCHES THE BALL, THE OFFICIAL MUST MAKE A DECISION AS TO THE LEGALITY OF THE HIT. THE RULE IS THAT THE BALL MUST BE CLEARLY HIT -- IT CANNOT VISIBLE STOP WHEN IT TOUCHES A BODY PART. THE PROBLEM IS, MANY PEOPLE HO PLAY INTRAMURAL VOLLEYBALL DIDN'T GROW UP WITH THE GAME AND THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND THE RULE NO MATTER HOW MANY DIFFERENT WAYS IT'S EXPLAINED TO THEM. IT JUST DOESN'T SINK IN. THEY WANT TO KNOW HOW OR HOW NOT TO HIT THE BALL. WHEN AN OFFICIAL BLOWS THE WHISTLE FOR AN ILLEGAL HIT, INVARIABLY THERE'S THAT QUESTION -- "WHAT DID I DO WRONG; HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO HIT IT"? IT'S VERY FRUSTRATING FOR BOTH OFFICIALS AND PLAYERS. SO, WE CAME UP WITH AN IDEA, AND THAT WAS TO USE HITTING TECHNIQUE AS A LARGE DETERMINANT OF THE LEGALITY OF THE HIT. WE INCORPORATED INTO THE RULES DESCRIPTIONS OF ALLOWABLE AND NON-ALLOWABLE METHODS AND CIRCUMSTANCES OF PLAYING THE BALL. IF A PLAYER USED IMPROPER TECHNIQUE IN PLAYING THE BALL, SUCH AS USING OPEN PALMS TO SCOOP OR SLING THE BALL, THEN THE PLAY WOULD BE VIEWED STRICTLY BY THE NORMAL RULES. HOWEVER, IF A PLAYER WERE POSITIONED CORRECTLY IN RELATION TO THE BALL, AND PROPER FORM WAS ATTEMPTED, THEN A MORE LENIENT CALL COULD BE MADE. THAT WOULD BE PARTICULARLY APPROPRIATE IN PASSING, SETTING AND BUMPING SITUATIONS THAT HAVE NO DIRECT INFLUENCE ON THE SCORING OF A POINT OR SIDE-OUT. ANY HIT THAT HAS A DISTINCTLY OFFENSIVE THRUST TO IT (SPIKE, DINK OR FLAT PASS OVER THE NET) WOULD HAVE TO BE VIEWED STRICTLY. IT PRETTY MUCH WORKED

OUT OKAY. ALTHOUGH THE OFFICIALS HAD TO THINK MORE ABOUT WHAT THEY WERE DOING, THE PLAYERS WERE MORE SATISFIED WITH THE WAY THE MATCHES WERE BEING CONDUCTED.

TO SUM ALL THIS UP, WE'VE DISCUSSED SEVERAL FACTORS THAT AN INTRAMURAL DIRECTOR CONSIDERS IN PROVIDING THE OFFICIATING FOR INTRAMURAL CONTESTS. YOU'VE GOT TO GET AS MANY NATURALLY TALENTED PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE TO BEGIN WITH. YOU'VE GOT TO PROVIDE SOME DEGREE OF TRAINING. STRONG, HANDS-ON SUPERVISION IS VERY IMPORTANT. AND SPORTS RULES AND PROGRAM FORMAT CAN BE MANIPULATED TO MAKE THE JOB EASIER. AND THERE'S ONE OTHER FACTOR THAT CAN ONLY BE AVAILABLE SPORADICALLY AND ONLY BY CHANCE. ONE YEAR BACK IN THE 1970'S A BEAUTIFUL BLONDE WALKED INTO MY OFFICE AND SAID SHE WANTED TO OFFICIATE BASKETBALL GAMES. I FIGURED SHE COULD DO THE WOMEN'S GAMES AND MAYBE SOME OF THE WEAKER MEN'S GAMES. TURNS OUT SHE WAS A PRETTY GOOD OFFICIAL; SO, I STARTED TO PUT HER ON THE DREADED FRATERNITY GAMES TO SEE WHAT WOULD HAPPEN. WELL, WE HARDLY HEARD A PEEP OUT OF THOSE GUYS. THEY WERE TOO BUSY GAWKING AND DROOLING TO CAUSE ANY TROUBLE. HE WOMAN WENT ON INTO HIGH SCHOOL OFFICIATING ND GOT QUITE A BIT OF NOTORIETY IN THE LOCAL MEDIA. IN A SENSE, SHE WAS MY MOST EFFECTIVE OFFICIAL. NO COMPLAINTS DURING HER GAMES. SO, MAYBE THAT'S THE REAL KEY TO THIS WHOLE DEAL. FORGET ABOUT TRAINING AND ALL THAT STUFF, JUST GO OUT AND RECRUIT BEAUTIFUL WOMEN.